

Mormonism – The Latter Day Saints

I. Historical perspective (statistics from 1964, 1991, 1995)

A.) Two groups, both claiming to be the Mormon Church, exist

- 1.) The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, with headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah – 2,000,000 members (1964); 11,000,000 Now.
- 2.) The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints with headquarters in Independence, Mo. -600,000 members (1964); and 240,000 as of 1995.
- 3.) Own considerable stock in the industrial and agricultural wealth of America. (1991 statistics show investment portfolio exceeds 5 billion dollars.)
- 4.) Have more than 15,000 missionaries on the field in 1964 (60,000 now) (church encourages its most promising young people – boys aged 20, girls aged 23 – to dedicate 2 years of their life to missionary work (self-supporting basis). Missionaries are beginning to be subsidized now. The missionary force is broken down as follows: 75% single males, 19% single females, and 6% married couples.
- 5.) The church is growing at an annual rate of 25,000 “conversions” (1964); 291,000 currently. The Mormon birth rate is 28.1 per thousand, compared with 15.9 per thousand Nationwide.
- 6.) Mormons are health conscience, not using tobacco, alcohol, tea, coffee, or coca-cola. Mormons are extremely zealous for "good works" and clean living. In addition to their regular tithing fund, the Mormon Church also encourages what it terms "fast offerings." This involves giving up two meals on the first Sunday of each month, the price of which is turned over to the church as a contribution to support and feed the poor.
- 7.) Mormons are known for their tithing (1960 budget of church exceeded 20 million). Statistics for 1991 show 4.3 billion dollars from its members per year plus 400 million from its many enterprises.
- 8.) They are building new churches every week with several temples in existence.
- 9.) Own Brigham Young U. with over 15,000 students (1964) and currently 37,000 students on two campuses. They also own 240 “seminaries” for junior and senior high students with over half a million students involved. They also have 50 schools outside the USA.

- 10.) Mormons are totally church and family oriented which has resulted in a low juvenile delinquency rate.
- 11.) Many influential and scholarly individuals have been produced by the Mormon Church. The US government has many Mormons at the highest levels.
- 12.) It has been said that where the uneducated flock to the Jehovah Witnesses, the Mormon Church attracts the educated and therefore it exalts education and is prolific in its publication ministry.

I. Church Structure

A.) Divided into

- 1.) stakes - large grouping of churches (diocese) (avg. 4,000 mem.)
In 1995 there were approximately 2,008 stakes.
- 2.) wards - local organized church (avg. 600-1,200 mem.)
- 3.) independent branches - ward in embryo (50-200 mem.) not yet a church or ward. In 1995 there were approximately 21,774 wards and branches.
- 4.) Temples (12 in 1963) may be entered by Mormons in good standing only. Two types of ceremonies, very important in present day Mormonism, are performed here: celestial marriage and baptism for the dead.(1 Cor 15:29)
- 5.) The wards are all consolidated in stakes, each of which is supervised by a stake president and two counselors, aided in turn by twelve high priests, known as the "stake high counsel".

B.) Two types of priesthood recognized - every male Mormon may belong to one or the other, providing that his understanding of the teachings of the Church and his daily life are in conformity with church requirements.

- 1.) Aaronic priesthood - (12 years of age or older) lower priesthood
- 2.) Melchizedek priesthood - (19 years of age or older) higher priesthood.
All office bearers must be of this order.

C.) Highest governing body of the church is:

- 1.) Council of twelve Apostles
- 2.) Council elects the First Presidency consisting of the President (Patriarch of the church), and 2 counselors to the president.

III. Source of Authority

A.) King James Version of the Bible

- 1.) James E. Talmage, an authority for the Mormon Church in his doctrinal works, A Study of the Articles of Faith, in Article 8 states, "We believe the Bible to be the Word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the Word of God". Mormons have many reservations as to the correctness of past and present Bible translations, but no reservation with regard to the Book of Mormon.
- 2.) Joseph Smith is quoted as saying, in Doctrines of Salvation III pg.191 "Guided by the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and covenants, and the Spirit of the Lord, it is not difficult for one to discern the error in the Bible."
- 3.) It is interesting to note that Joseph Smith claimed the authority to alter the text of scripture that not even Christ Himself claimed.
 - a.) He constantly used the term, "It is written..." Matt.4:4,7,10
 - b.) In Luke 16:29-31, the need for a source of revelation additional to the Bible is clearly disavowed, v.31.
 - c.) Luke 16:17 states that not even a cross of a "t" or the dot of an "i" will fail in regards to the Scriptures. (KJV)

B.) There is a much more correct version the Mormons use among themselves.
"Inspired Version: The Holy Scriptures, Containing the Old and New Testaments."
An Inspired revision by Joseph Smith, Jr.

C.) The Book of Mormon is believed to be another witness to the history of God's dealings with mankind. "Because that ye have a Bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words"...2 Nephi 29:6,9,10

- 1.) A History of Two Peoples, the Nephites and Jaredites who were supposed to migrate to America thousands of years ago and who recorded their history on gold tablets which were buried in the Hill Cumorah. The angel Moroni delivered to Joseph Smith these tablets with a key to understand them (the Urim and Thumin) Ex 28:30; 1 Sam 28:6; Ezz 2:63; Neh 7:65. The Book of Mormon is supposed to be God's revelation to His other sheep Jn.10:16. Jesus, after He arose from the dead, came and preached to His people in America. (In King James English)
- 2.) In Pearl of Great Price, under Joseph Smith 2:64-65, Joseph Smith claims that Professor Charles Anthon saw handwritten copies of some of the plates and stated them to be Egyptian, Chaldian, Assyrian, and Arabic, etc.

- a.) On file is a letter written by Dr. Anthon to Mr. E.D. Howe relating how Smith had come to him with the above and that it was a hoax...
 - b.) Archeologically, there is no evidence at all of any of the material found in the Book of Mormon. (The Smithsonian Institute is on record stating that there is no evidence to back the book.)
 - c.) According to a careful survey of the Book of Mormon, it contains at least 25,000 words from the King James Bible. In fact, verbatim quotations, some of considerable length have caused the Mormons no end of embarrassment for many years. (Remember, the King James Version was written thousands of years after the plates.)
 - d.) In many cases, the Book of Mormon uses terms that are quotations from the K.J.V. that were translated wrongly in the K.J.V. (Example: I Nephi 4:9 a steel sword – Steel was not in existence in 600B.C.) etc...
- D.) Pearl of Great Price – spurious writing attributed to Moses, Abraham, etc... which developed the Mormon’s “Biblical” doctrines that are not found in the Bible.
- E.) Doctrines and Covenants – revelations received by Joseph Smith concerning the Mormons’ major doctrines.
- F.) Revelations received from the president, his counselors, and the Council of Twelve on a continuing basis.

(Statistics taken from the “The Kingdom of the Cults” by Walter Martin and “The Four Major Cults” by Hoekema)

NOTE: It will be hard for us to establish Mormon doctrine at times because the Book of Mormon contradicts itself from time to time and contradicts their other “inspired” books.

Examples:

1. Concerning polygamy (Doctrines and Covenants 132:32) “Go ye, therefore, and do the works of Abraham: enter ye into my law and ye shall be saved... God commanded Abraham, and Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham to wife... because this was the law...Abraham received concubines, and they bore him children; and it was accounted unto him for righteousness, because they were given unto him, and he abode in my law;...

In the Book of Mormon Jacob 2:26-28 it reads:

“Wherefore, I the Lord God will not suffer that this people shall do like unto them of old... For there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none; for I the Lord God, delight in the chastity of women. And whoredom’s are an abomination before Me;”

2. Concerning monotheism (Pearl of Great Price – Moses 2:1)

“I am the Beginning and the end, the Almighty God, by mine Only Begotten I created these things; yea in the beginning I created the heaven, and the earth...”

(Pearl of Great Price - Abraham Chapter 4)

“And then the Lord said: Let us go down. And they went down at the beginning, and they, that is the Gods, organized”..., (almost every verse of the chapter begins “and the Gods” did)

It should also be noted that many of Joseph Smith’s prophecies never came to pass.

Examples:

1. Doctrines and covenants Section 87 – Dec. 25, 1832

Joseph Smith predicts a war between the northern and the southern states saying that Great Britain would join in. he also stated that all nations would join in, etc...

2. Joseph Smith received a revelation that his followers should build him a house at Nauvoo so that God could dwell with Smith and His descendents. Smith was told they would dwell there forever (Section 124: 22-23, 59) Smith was killed by mob action and the Mormons were run out of town so they headed for Utah and a new land under the leadership of Brigham Young. (The Bible tells us concerning a prophet Deut.13:1-4,10; 18:20-22; Gal.1:7-8)

IV. Mormon Doctrine with Biblical refutation

A. Priesthood

1. Mormon

a.) Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery received the Aaronic priesthood from John the Baptist May 15, 1829, and then the Melchizedekian priesthood from Peter, James and John (P of GP Joseph Smith 2:67-72). Notice theirs is “the gospel of repentance and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins.”

b.) According to Doctrines and Covenants Sec 84:6-12, the Aaronic and Melchizedekian priesthood are two aspects of the same priesthood. They claim that it is through this priesthood “the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God.” They claim that it is through this priesthood that salvation comes to mankind. They also state, “Priesthood continueth in the church of God in all generations and is without beginning of days or end of years.” “And the Lord confirmed a priesthood also upon Aaron and his seed...which priesthood also continueth and abideth forever...” According to Doctrines and Covenants Sec 107:1-6, “there are two divisions or grand heads – one is the Melchizedek Priesthood, and the other is the Aaronic or Levitical Priesthood.

2.) Biblical Teaching – There are basically 3 priesthoods to be considered from a biblical standpoint. They are the Levitical (Aaronic), the Melchizedekian, and the priesthood of all believers.

a.) Aaronic Priesthood – This priesthood was established under the Mosaic system. Under this system God was to be the tribe of Levites’ inheritance, and they were to be the keepers of God’s tabernacle and later the temple. Under the Mosaic law the Levites were to represent the nation of Israel before God and they were the ones that carried on the sacrificial system. (God originally required the firstborn of the sons of Israel; Ex.13:1-2, but later takes the tribe of Levi instead; Num.3:3,6,9,12-13). The Mosaic system with its priesthood made nothing perfect, but was given till Messiah would come. The Law made nothing perfect. Heb.7:11,18-19; Heb 10:1-18; Gal.3:19,25; Rom.3:24-28. It was not permanent, eternal, everlasting, etc... (It should also be noted that the Levitical priests only represented Israel and never the Gentiles. A convert had to become a Jew in order to be represented by them).

b.) Melchizedekian priesthood – Gen.14:17-20; Heb.5:8-11; 6:20; 7:1-28; Ps.110:4 (Christ Himself is a priest after this order. He shares it with no other. He holds it eternally, Heb.7:24. He represents us before the very throne of Grace, Heb.4:14-16. Unlike the Aaronic priesthood the Melchizedekian priesthood is one of King-Priest. Another difference is that our Lord offered for sins but unlike Aaronic priests, He offered Himself.

c.) The priesthood of believers (The nation Israel had a priesthood. The Church is a priesthood). Believers also are priest-kings, Rev.20:6. Every believer is a priest unto God, I Pet.2:5-9; Rev.1:6. (Every believer has a priestly relation to God and is held accountable for what they do in service).

1.) The service of sacrifice (Rom.12:1) (“mercies of God” refers to all that God has done for the believer as explained in the preceding chapters. The presentation of the body as a “living sacrifice: is self dedication to God’s will for the believer which He then places into service for God's glory, Eph.2:10, Rom.12:2). A believer is commanded to sacrifice toward God in 3 ways....

To dedicate and consecrate himself Rom.12:1-2

a.) To give God the sacrifice of our lips by offering up continued praise to Him, Heb.13:15.

b.) To sacrifice our wealth to Him, Phil.4:18; II Cor.8

2.) The service of worship – Our worship towards God is not to be in formality of actions but in sincerity of heart, Col.2:8,16-23.

3.) The service of intercession – Having unhindered access to God on the grounds of the Blood of Christ, the believer is able to minister in intercession, Rom.8:26-27; Heb.10:19-22. Examples of such intercession are I Tim.2:1; & Col.4:12.

B.) Doctrine of God the Father

1.) Mormon

a.) Mormon theology is polytheistic. They believe that the universe is inhabited by different gods who have spirit children which are given bodies on planets.

b.) Several quotations from Mormon sources are given to support the above statement.

❖ We affirm that to deny the materiality of God's person is to deny God: for a thing without parts has no whole, and an immaterial body cannot exist. the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints proclaims against the incomprehensible God, devoid of "body, parts, or passions" as a thing impossible of existence...
(The Articles of Faith pg.48)

❖ I will prove that the world is wrong by showing what God is... God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted Man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens...I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all Eternity I will refute that idea, and will take away and do away with the veil, so you may see... he was once a man like us; yea, that God himself the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth the same as Jesus Christ himself did...(What is it? concerning loved ones who die).
To inherit the same power, the same glory, and the same exaltation, until you arrive at the station of a God and ascend the throne of eternal power, the same as those who have gone before...
(The Journal of Discourses Vol.6 pg.2-4 Character and Being of God, etc... - teachings of Joseph Smith)

❖ Remember that God, our heavenly Father, was perhaps once a child, and mortal like we ourselves, and rose step by step in the scale of progress, in the school of advancement; has moved forward and overcome; until He has arrived at the point where He now is.
(Journal of Discourse Vol.1, pg.123)

2.) Biblical Teaching concerning God the Father

a.) The question "Who is God?" is a question that can only be answered in small part. God has revealed Himself to man in several different ways but certainly only to a small degree. Man being a finite creature can only comprehend God as far as the finite mind can contemplate infinity. God has revealed Himself to men (in part) and the revelation is sustained and enforced by the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit.

- ❖ It should be noticed that apart from the Son, the Father cannot be known; Matt.11:27, Jn.17:2-3; Col 2:9; Heb 2:14-18; Jn 14:8-9
 - ❖ The multitudes of mankind have heard about God; only born-again children of God can know Him as a father. Acts 17:16-31
- b.) There are two sources from which man can learn about God. The first is from natural revelation which we will spend a little time on. The second is from biblical revelation (supernatural) which we will spend more time on.
- i.) **NATURALISTIC THEISM** can be reasoned inductively (phenomena back to reason - effect back to cause) or deductively (cause to effect)

- ❖ There are 3 inductive proofs for the existence of God.
 1. *Cosmological argument* – (There must be a sufficient cause.)The universe is a phenomenon that requires that there be an adequate cause.Rom 1:18-20

NOTE:

#1- There are four theories that have been put forth to explain the origin of the material universe:

- a. The universe evolved itself out of nothing.
This theory is in total contradiction to the 1st and 2nd Laws of thermodynamics (Laws of entropy).
- b. Matter is eternal and its forms have existed forever.
- c. Matter has existed forever, but its present form has been subject to self-development (evolution).
- d. Matter is eternal, but its present form is the result of God's work.
- e. Matter is a created thing, being caused to exist from nothing by the power of God, which is the Biblical revelation. Heb 11:3; Gen 1:1; Heb 1:2-3; Jn 1:1-3; Col 1:15-17 (For any who accept the biblical revelation, this subject is settled!)

#2- Though man shares many things in the area of his organic structure with the animal kingdom, he is far superior to any member of that kingdom.

The hands of man are able to construct the complex designs of his mind in both the necessities of life along with all forms of art.

His use of his voice, eyes, and ears further set him apart. All of these abilities set him apart in the creation, just as Gen 1:26-27 indicates that man was to be.

God is the first cause of all other things.
He is the uncaused cause of all causes.
(Gen.1:1; Heb.11:3)

Three truths must be accepted:

- a.) every effect must have a cause
As the house proves the fact of a builder, so the universe proves the fact of a Creator. Heb 3:4
- b.) that the effect is dependent upon its cause for its existence
- c.) nature cannot produce itself
Either matter is eternal or God is , and the Second Law of Entropy demonstrates that matter is not.

Conclusion:

The universe is caused by the direct creation of a self-existent, intelligent, and eternal cause.

(To assert that anything has caused itself to exist is to assert that it acted before it existed, which is an absurdity. Nonexistence cannot engender existence.)

There is a First Cause, self-existent and eternal, and that First Cause is wise enough to conceive of creation in all its marvel, and powerful enough to bring it in to being.

Heb 11:3 deals with the beginning of Creation. God (I AM) preceded Heb 11:3. John 1:1 describes the time prior to Creation.

2. *Teleological Argument* – (There is a set order to the universe.

All laws of nature testify to this.)

God exists - from the presence of order and design in the universe. Such a beautifully ordered universe requires that there be an intelligent designer. (Man with all his ingenuity and inventiveness originates nothing; he only utilizes the provision and forces which were already wrought in the creation of God.)

All the laws of "nature", mathematics, etc., are but discoveries of what exists from the moment that God created it. We can send rockets to Mars because all of creation manifests the results of the same intelligent creator.

(Rom.1:18-22; Ps.19:1; Job 12:7-10)

3.) *Anthropological Argument* – (Moral Argument)

There are philosophical and moral features in man's constitution that require that there be an origin for these qualities in his creator.

Man is composed of both a material part and an immaterial part which possesses the attributes of thought, reason, sensibility, conscience, etc... (C.S. Lewis showed that with all the laws of "nature" you could establish the law by observing the phenomenon.)

You know about the law of gravity because when you drop an object it falls every time.

With man's moral conscience it's different. Where does man get his knowledge of right and wrong? Men know what's right yet you don't get that knowledge from observing man because he does wrong.

Where does the sense of right come from? A Holy first cause or creator.

4.) *Deductive or Ontological Argument* – (God must exist because the concept of God exists.) This argument will not be given because it generally proves little more than a reason for the argument. Science fiction would appear to contradict this argument also.

Conclusion concerning natural revelation: A person can reason that there must be a god, but apart from special (Biblical) revelation man would remain lost and without light concerning The Creator who created all that is. Rom 10:13-15; Acts 17:22-31

Argument does not create divine enlightenment, but rather the New Birth does. Man can know there is a god by reason, but he cannot know God apart from the written Word of God, the Bible. Faith (understanding) requires the action of the Holy Spirit. Rom 10:17; Gal 1:15-16; Matt 165-17; Matt 117; Jn 16:12-15

2.) **BIBLICAL THEISM** is the unfolding of the details of the truth concerning God in explicit terms recorded by divine inspiration and preserved in God's Word. There may be problems of interpretation but there are no problems of trustworthiness.

- ❖ God is a person. Man is created in the likeness and image of God. (Gen.1:26,27) There is a similarity to be traced between God and man. The Bible tells us of the nature and character of God. (those aspects of God's person that are presented in the Bible are perfect to an infinite degree, but in their nature they resemble those imperfect faculties and elements which belong to man. Little can be known of all that God is, but a proper conception of God is possible.) Similies and metaphors are often used to describe God because the Revelation of Him is limited to our capacity to understand.

Note: Man's likeness to God is primarily in his immaterial aspects, not in his corporal nature. God manifested Himself in a body when He became flesh in the Second person of the Trinity, but God is not limited to this manifestation.

- ❖ God is Spirit (Jn.4:24).He became flesh for our benefit, Jn 1:1, 14; Lk 24:39; Col 1:15; Col 2:9; Heb 1:3 (He who has seen me has seen the Father). Anthropomorphic terms are used to describe God's capacity for doing precisely those things, which are the functions of the physical part of man. They do not teach that God is a man.

With reference to God it is declared:

- ◆ “The eternal God is my refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms” Deut 33:27
- ◆ “My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand” Jn 10:29
- ◆ “Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool” Isa 66:1
- ◆ “The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him” 2 Chron 16:9
- ◆ “Behold the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear” Isa 59:1
- ◆ “For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it” Isa 58:14

- ◆ Reference is made also to the “face” of God in Ex 33:11,20 and his “nostrils” in 2 Sam 22:9,16
 - ◆ Ps. 94:9
 - ◆ Ps.91:4
 - ◆ Remember, to know God's characteristics is not to know Him as a person. Voltaire stated: "God made man in His own image, and man has returned the compliment."
- ❖ God as a person, having a personality, possesses
Intellect: Ps.147:5; Is.45:21; Is.44:6-8; Heb.4:13
- Sensibility or emotion: - desires – He loves righteousness and hates iniquity. He is of tender compassion, "God is love" I Jn.4:16
- Will: determines in the direction of rational ends Ps.115:3; Is.46:10, Dan.4:35
- ❖ God has revealed Himself to man, not as an influence or blind force, but as a living Person with whom man may experience fellowship 1 Jn 1:1-4.

The Father and the Son reveal each other as Persons Matt 11:27.

The Father and Son send the Spirit whose mission is clearly that of a Person Jn 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-11; Acts 5:3,9
 2 Thess 2:6-8.

The foundational truth of all Scripture is the fact that God is One God who subsists in Three Persons.